



The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large

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Celebrating in Washington, D.C.

A White House Holiday



photo courtesy White House Historical Association



photo courtesy White House Historical Association



photo courtesy White House Historical Association



photo: Cecil Stoughton, White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston



photo courtesy White House

Where will you and your family sleep on Christmas Eve? How will you spend the holiday?

If you were a kid living in the White House, your family Christmas would probably involve opening presents in the Yellow Oval Room, then sharing a big turkey dinner.

To find out more about White House Christmases through the years, The Mini Page talked with the chief historian at the White House Historical Association.

Christmas is different now

Today, Christmas and other winter holidays are surrounded with special events, and a lot of attention is paid to gift-giving. Stores and advertisers

count on the holiday season to make a lot of money each year. We consumers are bombarded with TV and catalog promotions for everything from toys to fruitcake.

But in the early years of the United States, Christmas was a more private, family holiday. People gathered together and perhaps shared a special meal.

Christmas for children

In the 1800s at the White House, Christmas preparations were quite simple. Greens such as holly or fir might have decorated the mantelpieces, along with stockings.

Some presidents had young children, but others sometimes had grandchildren or extended family

living in the White House along with the first family.

For example, the first Christmas party at the White House was given in 1800 for President John Adams' granddaughter Suzannah, who also lived there. In 1834, President Andrew Jackson planned a big party for children that included dancing, games, dinner and an indoor "snowball fight" with cotton balls!

In the mid-1800s, President Andrew Johnson held a party for about 500 children in the East Room. President Theodore Roosevelt invited children to a carnival party in 1903 where they danced, played games and received special treats: ice cream shaped like Santa Claus.



photos courtesy White House Historical Association

People wait outside the White House on New Year's Day, 1927, to greet the president and first lady.

Greeting the people

Many years ago, New Year's Day was a bigger holiday than Christmas in Washington, D.C. Summers were very hot in the city, so the social season was during the winter.

Presidents John Adams through Calvin Coolidge hosted large public receptions on New Year's Day. Congressmen, Supreme Court justices and regular people lined up to greet the president and first lady.

Preparing for the open house involved decorating, preparing food and many other tasks. After standing and accepting visitors all day, the president and first lady were exhausted.

Precious Ornaments

Presidents' ornaments

In 1981, the White House Historical Association started making annual Christmas ornaments. Each one honors one of our presidents. Money earned from sales of the ornaments helps the association preserve historic rooms at the White House and educate the public about the president's home.



This ornament from 2008 honors President Benjamin Harrison.

The first ornament, for President George Washington, was shaped like a weathervane from Mount Vernon, his home in Virginia.



The 1999 ornament was in honor of President Abraham Lincoln.



The 2014 White House Christmas Ornament

The 2014 ornament

For 2014, the White House Christmas ornament is a 1920s-era train. It is in two pieces: a locomotive and President Warren G. Harding's rail car, the Superb.

Harding loved trains and as a child hoped to be a train conductor when he grew up. In June 1923, he set out on a "Voyage of Understanding," crossing the country by train. Along the way he stopped in many cities and towns to meet with Americans.

After sailing to Alaska, where he got to drive a train, Harding and his group returned to San Francisco in early August. While there, President Harding died suddenly. The Superb carried his casket back to Washington, D.C.

Ready Resources



The Mini Page provides ideas for websites, books or other resources that will help you learn more about this week's topics.

On the Web:

- bit.ly/1zhgh41
- bit.ly/1xup1UY
- 1.usa.gov/1zhgKmP

At the library:

- "Christmas in the White House" by Albert J. Menendez
- "First Dog's White House Christmas" by J. Patrick Lewis and Beth Zappitello



Basset Brown's

Try 'n' Find

White House Christmas

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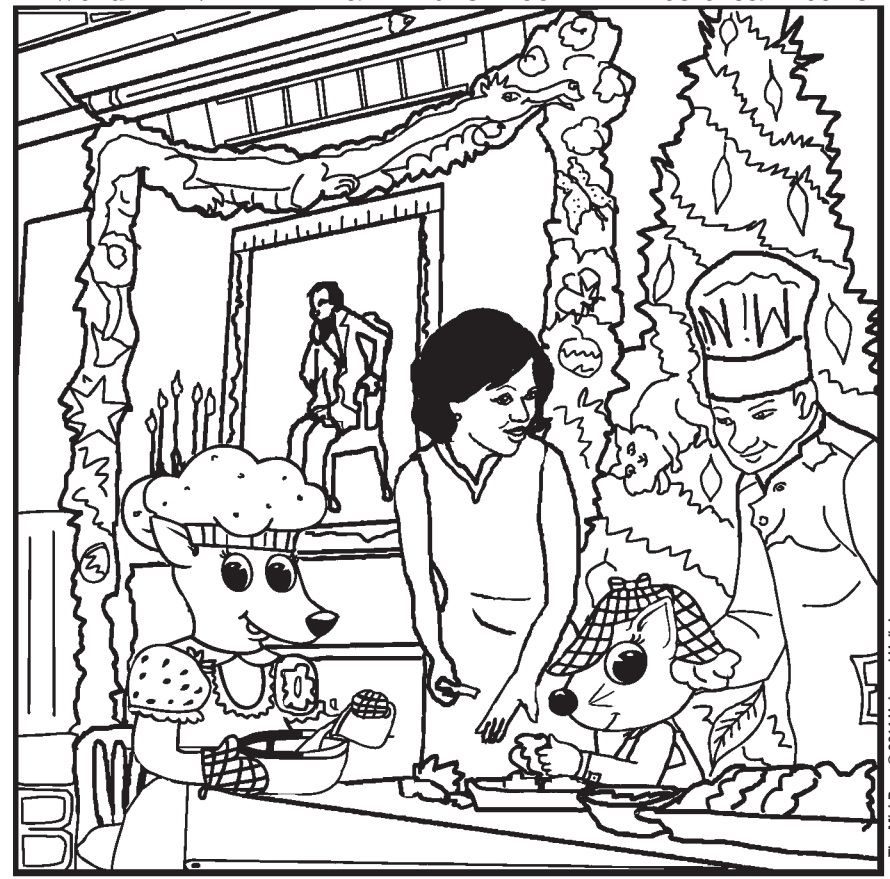
Words that remind us of a White House Christmas are hidden in the block above. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find: CHILDREN, CHRISTMAS, CHURCHILL, COMMUNITY, ELLIPSE, FAMILY, NATIONAL, ORNAMENT, OVAL, PAGEANT, PARTY, PEACE, PET, PORTICO, ROOM, THEME, TRADITION, TREE, WASHINGTON, WHITE HOUSE.



Mini Spy

Mini Spy and Rookie Cookie are helping prepare for the White House Christmas. See if you can find: pig

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> letter B | <input type="checkbox"/> needle | <input type="checkbox"/> cat | <input type="checkbox"/> doughnut |
| <input type="checkbox"/> strawberry | <input type="checkbox"/> pencil | <input type="checkbox"/> letter E | <input type="checkbox"/> butterfly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ruler | <input type="checkbox"/> star | <input type="checkbox"/> ladder | <input type="checkbox"/> two letter A's |
| <input type="checkbox"/> number 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> muffin | <input type="checkbox"/> dragon | <input type="checkbox"/> feather |
| <input type="checkbox"/> word MINI | <input type="checkbox"/> man in the moon | <input type="checkbox"/> ice cream cone | |



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Rookie Cookie's Recipe Butternut Squash With Maple Butter

You'll need:

- 1 large butternut squash, halved lengthwise
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

What to do:

1. Scoop out seeds and stringy stuff from squash halves. Using a sharp knife, score the inside of each half several times.
2. Place the halves in a shallow baking dish, cut side up. Add about 1/4 inch water to the bottom of the baking dish to prevent the skins from burning.
3. Season the insides of the squash with salt and pepper.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the syrup, sugar, butter and cinnamon. Brush the mixture inside each squash half.
5. Bake for 1 hour or until squash is very soft and tops are browned. Serves 4.

You will need an adult's help with this recipe.
Adapted from "The Robin Takes 5 Cookbook for Busy Families" with permission from Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com).
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Meet Orlando Bloom



photo by Mark Pokorny, ©2014 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Inc. All rights reserved.

Orlando Bloom plays Legolas in the movie "The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies." He is famous for playing that character in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy and in previous "Hobbit" movies.

He has acted in several TV shows and films, including "The Three Musketeers" and the "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies.

Orlando, 37, was born in Canterbury, Kent, England. He has dyslexia, which makes it harder to read. He began acting in school and in plays at his community theater. When he was 16, he began studying acting at a school in London.

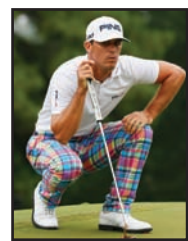
Orlando speaks French and English. He supports charitable causes such as UNICEF, which helps children around the world.

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Gus Goodsport's Supersport

Billy Horschel



Height: 6-0
Age: 28
Hometown: Grant, Florida

Golf can be a frustrating game as golfers contend with strong winds, near-misses and bad bounces. The tough breaks can add up, and in a sport where there is only one winner, losing can wear down a player. But a champion must always be ready for an opportunity. Billy Horschel was ready for his.

After several unsuccessful seasons as a professional golfer, something clicked for Billy during the 2013 season when he qualified for the PGA Tour for the third time. In his 61st tournament appearance, Billy got his first tour victory. Then things began to get interesting.

In 2014, Billy steadily advanced in the world rankings and had 12 top-25 finishes — and still saved his best for last. He won the final two playoff tournaments of the season, including the Tour Championship, to capture the sport's FedEx Cup and secure his spot as one of the top golfers in the world.

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All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

Perry: Why was the piano player asked to join the baseball team?

Pete: Because he had perfect pitch!



Paula: What has lots of keys, a trunk and four legs?

Pierre: A piano up a tree!

Patty: Where did the music student leave his keys?

Penny: On the piano!



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Our National Trees



photo courtesy White House Historical Association

Michelle Obama, along with her daughters, Malia and Sasha, and their dogs, Sunny and Bo, greet the White House Christmas tree for 2013. The tree has been delivered by horse-drawn cart since 1966.

Pets at Christmas

Most people think of their pets as members of the family. It's that way for presidents, too.

Animals became part of the theme for first lady Laura Bush's Christmas one year, "All Creatures Great and Small." President Richard Nixon and his wife, Pat, dressed their dogs up and had photographs taken of them with their own little Christmas tree.



photo courtesy U.S. National Archives

President and Mrs. Clinton's cat, Socks, poses next to a gingerbread replica of the White House in 1993.

The Mini Page thanks William Bushong, chief historian of the White House Historical Association, for help with this issue.



photo courtesy John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

President and Mrs. Kennedy stand next to the Blue Room tree in 1961. The theme for the tree was the "Nutcracker Suite."

Blue Room tree

The first Christmas tree in the Blue Room of the White House was placed there by the children of President William Howard Taft. The president and first lady were away from the White House at Christmas in 1909, and their grown children were hosting extended family for the holiday.

Mrs. Hoover was the first to have an "official" White House tree, and it became a project for future first ladies.

In 1961, Jacqueline Kennedy declared a theme for the public Christmas display for the first time. In 2013, Michelle Obama chose "Gather Around: Stories of the Season" for the theme. Military families made greeting cards depicting their home states to decorate the tree.

The tree must not be more than 19 feet tall. Before its arrival, workers have to remove the chandelier in the Blue Room for the tree to stand in the center!

Look in your newspaper to find out where and when to watch the lighting of the national Christmas tree.

National community tree

In 1923, President Coolidge promoted the use of electric power by lighting a tree on the Ellipse, a park just south of the White House. Later, the national tree moved to several different locations near the White House.

Today the national tree is not a cut tree; it's a living, permanent tree on the Ellipse. Each year, the president and his family light the tree, and the president makes a speech.

Pageant of Peace

The lighting of the national tree marks the beginning of several weeks of programs, musical events and religious celebrations called the Pageant of Peace.

A special guest

In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt held the tree ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill arrived in Washington on Dec. 22 for a meeting with the president and was there on Dec. 24 when the lighting ceremony took place. Along with President Roosevelt, Churchill spoke to the crowd from the South **Portico**, or porch.



photo courtesy White House Historical Association

1923 National Christmas Tree

Next week, The Mini Page is all about the New Year's Day Rose Parade in Pasadena, California.

The Mini Page Staff

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